

health insurance plans, so there has to be affordable and accessible health care for those young persons as they strike out on their own in the workplace.

For our small business owners who want to provide health care, they know that, in fact, the opportunity is there if we do it in the right kind of way, if we make it affordable for them and if we allow the small businesses to do what they want to do to invest in their communities.

We also know that, for those Americans who don't have health insurance, we can't pass them up anymore. We can't pass up the 47 million people a year who are without health insurance.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will close and say it's time for us to get on with the business of decision-making and to bring real health care reform with a robust public option to the American people.

THE RULE OF LAW

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, this past week, I discovered I made an error on my House financial disclosure forms for 2006 and 2007. Let's get this clear.

I properly reported my stock dividends, stock sales and capital gains on my Federal tax returns, and I paid all the taxes in full. I properly reported dividend income on my stocks and the sale amount of my stocks on my House financial disclosure forms in both of those years. My error was in leaving the amount of the capital gains from the sales off the forms. I have amended both of these forms to reflect these amounts, and this has not changed my net worth one penny.

There was a good editorial on this in the Roll Call this week, and I urge my fellow Members to read that editorial.

To make the point on this issue of my amending my House disclosures, today, I have posted online my Federal tax returns for 2006 and 2007 so there can be no question about whether or not I paid my taxes as they were due. I do this because I intend to continue my discussion of the rule of law, and I think it's important that I do that.

Yet I'm not the first one to take this step. In one of the same years that we're discussing here, then-Senator Barack Obama made the identical, same error that I made on my House disclosure forms. When he discovered that he made that omission, the same as the omissions I made, he did the same thing as I am doing. He corrected his return, and posted his Federal tax return online. I have followed the lead of the President of the United States in correcting this issue.

It's now time for House Ways and Means Committee Chairman CHARLES RANGEL and Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner to pony up. Could it be that the only reason these two hold back is that, maybe, they have something to hide?

Chairman RANGEL failed to pay income taxes for over a decade on his Caribbean resort property while Secretary Geithner evaded withholding taxes on income from the International Monetary Fund over multiple years. Neither of these gentlemen has paid any penalty on their violations as would a normal American taxpayer.

The American public needs to know that Chairman RANGEL has not again failed to report or pay Federal taxes while still not paying penalties and interest on his previous evasions, all while overseeing the IRS on behalf of the House of Representatives.

They also need to know that the Secretary of the Treasury is not using his high station to avoid complying with the same IRS rules as his fellow citizens. While Secretary Geithner is asking his fellow taxpayers to pay a 20 to 50 percent penalty for failing to report and to pay income taxes on foreign deposits, he has failed to pay a nickel on multiple years of evading Federal taxes on income from the International Monetary Fund.

My opinion is that anyone who fails to disclose income or to pay taxes should pay a reasonable penalty with interest. If not, our Tax Code becomes unenforceable.

I also believe there is a higher law here, which is the equal protection clause under the 14th Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. Secretary Geithner cannot and should not legally charge his fellow Americans penalties when he has paid none himself. That would seem to be a violation of the Constitution.

Next week, I will introduce legislation dealing with the Secretary of the Treasury's failure to abide by the same laws as the rest of the country. If anyone thinks that I will slack off defending the rule of law because of a House disclosure error, they obviously have got another thing coming.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FLORIDA'S PREPAID COLLEGE TUITION PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to encourage all Florida residents to consider enrollment in Florida's Prepaid College Tuition Program.

I am a strong advocate of having parents and students get an early start on saving for college. As a mother and as a grandmother, as well as a former educator, I know the struggles working parents face when their children apply

to college. Even in the best of times, parents and young adults can have trouble paying for tuition.

As a coauthor of the Florida prepaid plan, when I was a member of the Florida legislature, I knew that we could help make paying for college education easier on all of Florida's families. We created the Florida prepaid plan so that parents could lock in their children's tuition costs early and could ensure that they would be able to receive quality educations when their time came.

This plan has been extremely successful. Even as similar plans across the country are struggling, Florida's prepaid plan has a solid future. More than 206,000 students have attended college in Florida with the assistance of our State's Florida Prepaid College Tuition Program. With college tuition rising at about 6 percent each year, there is no reason not to take part in this program. There is flexibility in this program to allow parents to find the right plans and the right payment schedules which best fit a family's needs.

In addition to locked-in tuition rates, Florida's Prepaid College Tuition Program offers a tax-free investment fund—an account where money can be saved for tuition and additional college expenses. This program is truly helping families afford college for their children. Tuition plans vary depending on a child's age and a plan's options, but in most cases, the savings for a family can be incredible.

Prepaid plans can be bought by non-Florida residents, but the child for whom the plan is purchased must be a resident younger than 18 and not yet in the 12th grade. If the child decides not to go to college, the money is refunded or it can be transferred to a brother or to a sister. Also, that plan is good even if the child and the parents move out of State. Many States apply and accept Florida's prepaid plan.

The future of America lies in the hands of the next generation, and our children must be provided with the intellectual opportunities that they need to succeed. As a Nation and as a community, we must work together to improve the educational opportunities for all of our children. With the help of programs such as Florida's Prepaid College Tuition Program, we certainly have a valuable tool toward accomplishing this noble goal.

For anyone signing up before January 31, tuition rates will be locked in at the 2009-2010 tuition rates. Florida's public universities, Mr. Speaker, have been given the authorization to raise tuition up to 15 percent for next year. So, with these possible increases looming, there is no better time than now to make sure that our sons and daughters are afforded the education they rightfully deserve.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GOHMERT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Mr. Speaker, Congress is currently engaged in a very important debate on health care. It's complex, and Americans deserve an informed and transparent debate. Yet while this discussion continues, there is a country roughly 7,000 miles from here where nearly 35,000 American lives are on the line every day, and Congress has yet, given the changing circumstances there, to fully engage in a focused discussion with our military leaders on a comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan.

Since I was elected in 2004 and like so many of our colleagues, I have attended the funerals for fallen Nebraska soldiers. I've stood next to widows, whose young children were not of age, to comprehend the magnitude of the family loss. And yet when the time came, I did make the difficult decision to support sending more troops to Iraq in what was called a "surge." It was the right call.

I have continually met with those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, and I recently met with those who are preparing to redeploy. Their dedication to service and their commitment to our country continues to inspire me and the families they leave behind. The solemn responsibility for their lives continues to weigh very heavily upon us all.

Mr. Speaker, Afghanistan is facing complex security and governance challenges, and the situation demands engagement by this legislative body now. Although the administration developed a strategy for Afghanistan in March of this year, there is still a lack of clarity, some seeming uncertainty and certainly a hesitation to fully engage Congress in order to move forward in a decisive manner.

Many Afghan people have braved threats of brutal violence in order to vote. Our troops are courageously fulfilling their duties, and there is concern that their resources are stretched to the limit. None of us wants our soldiers at risk nor the opportunity for stability in Afghanistan to slip away.

The administration's top field general and the national security adviser are reflecting differently on the security situation in Afghanistan. General Jones stated on October 4, "I don't foresee the return of the Taliban, and I want to be very clear that Afghanistan is not in danger, imminent danger, of falling."

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Yet our senior military commander, General Stanley McChrystal, assessed

that "the situation in Afghanistan is serious; neither success nor failure can be taken for granted. Although considerable effort and sacrifice have resulted in some progress, many indicators suggest the overall situation is deteriorating."

We in Congress need to know, which is it? While we are responsible for funding and equipping the troops, the administration needs to define the next way forward, and this House needs to challenge the decision paralysis that threatens our mission in Afghanistan with each passing day. Until recently, the war in Afghanistan was the other war, the forgotten war, said by some to be the right war.

Mr. Speaker, as much as anyone, I would like to wait and to make sure that all is in order, but Afghanistan is slipping. According to General McChrystal, "Failure to gain the initiative and reverse insurgent momentum in the near term (next 12 months)—while African's security capacity matures—risks an outcome where defeating the insurgency is no longer possible."

In his initial assessment of the security situation, General McChrystal requested up to 40,000 additional combat troops. This is going to be a very tough call for all of us. Clearly, General McChrystal's judgment is based on keen insight about what it will take to prevail.

The American people deserve to know the unvarnished truth about the situation in Afghanistan and the fundamental purpose for our being there. Military families deserve to know the truth about the challenges facing their loved ones. Americans need to know that the administration is committed to a plan for success that minimizes our casualties, stabilizes the country, and brings the main contingent of our troops home quickly.

Let me venture to say that this is not just an American problem. The situation in Afghanistan and, for that matter, in Pakistan poses an international security threat, one that demands a shared response from the members of the international community. Pakistan has exhibited a stronger will of late to engage in the ungoverned tribal regions bordering Afghanistan.

Yet we have witnessed a curious range of responses by other governments. Some who see the urgency join us, others sit back hoping that we will save the day, and yet others exploit international tensions for economic and geopolitical gains. While it may be difficult to engender the will to send combat troops, our partner nations must help provide resources to stabilize Afghanistan.

Just as General Petraeus returned from Iraq to testify about the impact of the surge, I believe it would be helpful for President Obama to instruct General McChrystal to forthrightly articulate before this House his views, concerns and professional judgment.

Eight soldiers, Mr. Speaker, were killed yesterday. We need to develop adequately informed conclusions about the resources needed, Afghan capabilities, and international will.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MCHENRY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MCHENRY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

AFGHAN WAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, I want to start by reading from the October 27 front page of the Washington Post: U.S. Official Resigns Over Afghan War.

"When Matthew Hoh joined the Foreign Service early this year, he was exactly the kind of smart civil-military hybrid the administration was looking for to help expand its development efforts in Afghanistan."

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to Captain Hoh, retired marine, thank you for having the courage to speak out and to speak out on what you believe is the right policy for this Nation in Afghanistan.

I want to read parts of a letter that he wrote to Ambassador Nancy Powell when he resigned his position:

"I have served 6 of the previous 10 years in service to our country overseas, to include deployment as a U.S. Marine officer and a Department of Defense civilian in the Euphrates and Tigris River valleys of Iraq in 2004–2005 and 2006–2007. I did not enter into this position lightly or with any undue expectations nor did I believe my assignment would be without sacrifice, hardship or difficulty. However, in the course of my 5 months of service in Afghanistan, in both Regional Commands East and South, I have lost understanding of and confidence in the strategic purposes of the United States' presence in Afghanistan. I have doubts and reservations about our current strategy and planned future strategy, but my resignation is based not upon how we are pursuing this war, but why and to what end. To put simply: I fail to see the value or the worth in continued U.S. casualties or expenditures of resources in support of the Afghan Government in what is, truly, a 35-year old civil war."

He further writes in the letter to Ambassador Powell, Mr. Speaker:

"This fall will mark the eighth year of U.S. combat, governance and development operations within Afghanistan.